

### First storm of the season!

A very cold, slow, large storm is on the way toward California. This early season low has some intriguing characteristics. It is well stacked; which means that the low pressure area occurs vertically in about the same position through all levels of the atmosphere; low/ mid/ and upper. Presently, the center of the low is off the coast of Southern Oregon. This system slides from north to south along the coast, taking then a more western track – offshore off the coast of Southern California – later in its lifespan.

The strength of the low is highlighted by its very cold center. At 500 mb (which is a height of about 18,000 feet), the temperature within the low is a very cold –25 degrees C ( –13 degrees F). This is more typical of winter storms, and creates the instability needed to trigger thunderstorms.

Starting today, winds pick up across the state, and light rain begins over the Northern Sierra. Cool Capital breezes suppress daytime highs to an unseasonable upper 60's to low 70's range through Friday. A very low snow level for September is predicted, with snow falling at 7,000– 8,000' Thursday, over highway 50, and I-80. Total precipitation amounts over the Sierra and Feather River Basin will likely only add up to a few tenths of an inch. Usually this type of low doesn't develop until perhaps October, some years not until November.

The duration of this low will make for 3–4 day potential for wet weather over California. The biggest concern lies in Southern California, north of Santa Barbara. The recent Zaca fire burned an area of about 240,000 acres. Flash flooding is a possibility in two main target time periods; late Thursday, and overnight Friday night into early Saturday. Although those time frames mark the greatest likelihood of thunderstorms, each of the next several days mark a soggy period. In fact, the bull's-eye of greatest precipitation with this storm lies right over the Zaca burn area. Debris from the damaged watershed could pose a threat to local reservoirs.

The low becomes cutoff, or stalled without a steering push from the jet stream. This makes it that much tougher to forecast. However, good model agreement provides high confidence that the low will not eject across California until sometime on Saturday. That means a cool, rainy spell for the central and southern Sierra this weekend. Nevada gets pretty wet, as well.

Chances for Sacramento–area rainfall are most likely this evening, and Thursday afternoon/ night, with lower, but possible percentage chances through Friday. Look for a breezy, but drying and warming trend to begin Saturday in the valley. Sunday through Wednesday will be a rebound to typical late September pleasantness.

Other news from the weather world:

The fall (autumnal) equinox will occur Sunday, September 23, 2007 at 2:51 AM, Pacific Time.

Next week is California's first annual Hazardous Weather Awareness Week.

This is a good time to review weather preparedness plans, and, with rain due in the next few days, a good time to check for leaky roofs, car supplies for winter travel, and the fit of kids' sweaters and jackets.

Specific topic days include Monday; Severe Weather, Tuesday; Flood Safety, Wednesday; Wildfires, Thursday; Extreme Heat, Friday; Coastal and Winter Storms, and Saturday; NOAA Weather Radio.

Beginning October 1, the National Weather Service will no longer be issuing warnings by county. They will now issue based on storm forecasts. The switch to storm-based warnings is expected to reduce the area warned by about 75%, improving the accuracy of life and property response.

#### TIME CHANGE!

With new laws in place regarding Daylight Saving Time, you'll need to set your clocks back 1 hour at 2 AM on Sunday, November 4, 2007.

Be back with another newsletter when the season kicks off in earnest, sometime in October.

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